

## VI. PLANNING AND CITY ADMINISTRATION

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The Gloucester Plan 2000 process grappled with consistent concerns about the need to enhance ongoing planning and City administration of important community initiatives. Success in reaching the vision of the Community Development Plan is directly linked to reorganization of some City resources. Success is also linked to creating administrative assignments that are more responsive and accountable to the articulated policies that guide the future of the City.

### VI.1 RESOURCES AND TRENDS

Gloucester operates under a city form of government adopted by home rule charter with an elected mayor and a nine-member city council. The City provides general governmental services for the territory within its boundaries, including police and fire protection, disposal of rubbish, public education of grades K - 12 including vocational studies, water and sewer services, street maintenance, and parks and recreational facilities.



The City Council is the legislative branch of city government, and is responsible for enactment of local ordinances. The Council approves the budget and may make investigations into the affairs of the City and into the conduct and performance of any City agency.

The executive branch of City government consists of the Mayor and the City Administration, and is responsible for the fiscal, prudential and day-to-day municipal affairs. The Mayor is responsible for enforcing the City's laws, ordinances, and orders.

The Administration bears primary responsibility for seeing to the implementation of City policies and plans, including those contained within this document - furthermore, it must play a critical role in facilitating public awareness and fostering citizen involvement in planning. Ultimately, the quality of planning, and indeed, the quality-of-life for residents depends in large part on the effectiveness of the City's administrative process and the ability of City staff to find new and better ways to plan and communicate.

The Community Development Department is within the executive branch and is responsible for coordinating the physical growth and economic development of the city, as well as the development of municipal facilities. It also assists committees, boards and commissions. The Planning Department, within the Community Development Department, supports the Planning Board and the City Council. The comprehensive nature of community development requires city staff to frequently consult with other municipal divisions, such as the Health Department, Police, Fire, Engineering, and the Department of Public Works, regarding planning and implementation issues.

The Planning Board is responsible for establishing overall planning and community development policies to guide land use and development of municipal facilities, and for informing the public and other multi-member bodies with respect to those policies. The Planning Board recommends zoning changes to the City Council and will take the lead in implementation of this Plan.

Planning for the city is an on-going process wherein economic development, environmental protection, and preservation of the city's heritage and neighborhood identity are balanced through citizen involvement and professional guidance. The Planning Board, with support from many city committees, boards, residents, City staff and a planning consultant, was responsible for overseeing development of the Community Development Plan.

This final section of the plan is key to fostering management of city affairs to meet Plan expectations. Just as the rest of the Plan is not prescriptive in approach, this section assumes city administration will make its own adaptations in reaction to Plan recommendations. The Plan offers a few concrete suggestions for some actions and leaves most management decisions to the administration. It is to be hoped that the guidance and suggestions for citizen involvement and city staff can result in alliances that will make the work of both more effective.

Gloucester is linked to the mainland through its regional relationships as well as its physical boundaries. Neighboring jurisdictions may have plans and goals, that, at times, may conflict with ours. In other instances, we may have opportunities to collaborate with others to achieve common purposes. In either event, planning and implementation must, therefore, consider the jurisdictions and communities who affect us, and whom we, in turn, affect.

When all is said and done, the present and future vitality of our community rests on the shoulders of two groups. The first group comprises those residents or job-holders in the City who serve in voluntary civic organizations or who choose to become individually involved in the life of the City for its betterment. The second group includes all those with formal legislative or administrative roles such as the professionals in city administration and elected and appointed city officials. Without the first group, this Plan would be little more than a sterile statement of intent on the part of a disconnected and autocratic bureaucracy. Without the second, the Plan would be dead in the water, largely incapable of implementation.

The intent of this section of the Plan, therefore, is to explicate the role of City Administration in managing the City's affairs to meet the expectations of the Plan while offering suggestions as to how the grand and eternal partnership of citizen and government might be enhanced to the benefit of all.

## VI. 2. GOAL

The citizens of Gloucester should enjoy an efficient, responsive, and citizen-focused City government, committed to and fully supportive of citizen participation in planning and civic decision-making.

## VI. 3. OBJECTIVES

- Encourage an increasingly civic-minded and involved citizenry, supported by an effective public information and outreach infrastructure.
- Appoint new staff and multi-member boards and commissions, established to support implementation of the provisions of this Plan.
- Improve communication and coordination among the public, the City Council, boards and commissions, and between Gloucester and its neighbors.
- Develop efficient, clear and consistent permitting processes.
- Increase staff and monetary resources for implementing provisions of the Plan.
- Provide channels for keeping the public informed about and involved in decisions regarding disposition of public property.

### **A Service-Oriented City**

*The City should work to establish a citizen-focused culture among its employees. Actions to this end could include customer service training, performance review processes tied to citizen satisfaction, and incentives for superior performance.*

## VI. 4. STRATEGIES

### **Strategy I. Create opportunity for citizen input through increased public outreach and special meetings of the City's boards and commissions.**

Every board and commission in the City should establish at least one meeting annually to provide a presentation and to accept input on the activities of that group. This effort should be coordinated so that a comprehensive calendar is created for such meetings. The agendas and summary information from the meetings should be available to the public through the media, libraries, and the internet. The City should make full use of internet and GIS technologies to facilitate board and commission coordination and to enhance citizen understanding of land uses and related issues.

### **Strategy 2. Establish a City Office of Citizen Participation and Public Information.**

This Office would serve as a manager of information systems and processes, providing information to citizens and all parts of City government. The Office, to be established within the Community Development Department, would work with the Office of the Mayor and all City departments, with the following tasks:

- Ensure that citizens have accurate information;
- Ensure that citizens have opportunity to participate in planning and related activities;
- Assist boards and commissions in coordinating activities and communicating with the public;
- Work with neighborhood organizations;
- Facilitate city problem-solving meetings;
- Serve as a central repository and purveyor of information;
- Manage and improve the city's web site;
- Produce a city news-outlet;
- Explore the use of GIS and emerging technologies to improve distribution of information;
- Conduct periodic polls of citizen opinion and conduct other actions, as need arises.

### **Strategy 3. Create a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee with responsibility for monitoring progress and proposing practical actions to advance the Plan's goals and objectives.**

The City, through the Planning Board, should establish a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to help monitor progress toward the attainment of community goals expressed in this Plan. This Committee should serve in an informational and advisory capacity and should prepare semi-annual progress reports to the Planning Board with recommendations for remedial actions, as necessary. The Committee should establish a set of indicators and milestones, using the Plan Implementation Table to help monitor progress. Further, it should make recommendations leading to plan updating and continuous improvement. Finally, it should recommend a mechanism to ensure that city regulations, approvals, and actions are consistent with planning policies and objectives.

**Strategy 4. Devote adequate City staffing resources to manage new initiatives and programs called for in this Plan, including an Office of Natural and Cultural Resources, within the Community Development Department.**

Initiatives and strategies proposed in this Plan are assigned to various departments for staff support, planning and oversight, coordination, and resources. The City should commit the resources required to meet these needs. In particular, the Community Development Department should add staff to assume additional responsibilities, including an Office of Natural and Cultural Resources.

**Strategy 5. Increase training for City inspectors, and integrate the Inspector's Office with the Community Development Department.**

One of the busiest offices in the city, the Office of Inspection Services, will have an increased workload as strategies of this Plan are implemented. Much of that increased workload will require judgment calls applying new standards and methods of measuring standards. Specialized training will be necessary to prepare for new demands in Inspection Services. As an example, if historic character is to be preserved, inspectors should have training in historic preservation. Integrating these services with the Community Development Department will bring closer ties to the Planning office and the Office of Natural and Cultural Resources, charged with preparing policy and regulations to implement the provisions of this Plan. Integrated inspection services will be critical to applying policy and regulations.

**Strategy 6. Establish a semi-annual program to convene the members of all boards and commissions as a way to increase coordination, mutual understanding and consensus.**

The City's elected and appointed officials have few opportunities to collectively discuss overall issues facing the City and share ideas about solutions. The City and citizens will greatly benefit from once or twice a year idea-sharing sessions. The sessions could also be used to engage commissioners and board members in the development of common procedures and practices that will assure a consistency-in-approach.

**Strategy 7. Create and support a quarterly forum for area municipal leaders and senior administrative staff to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern.**

Actions taken in response to planning decisions often affect other jurisdictions; likewise, the plans and actions of other jurisdictions can help or obstruct implementation of plans in Gloucester. Regular, formally scheduled peer meetings of officials from Gloucester and surrounding communities can help build trust, identify opportunities and problems that affect more than one community, and allow joint forces to achieve goals that are unlikely to be achieved by a single community acting on its own.

**Strategy 8. Revise the permitting and approval process, as part of the zoning and subdivision review process.**

The permitting process should be tailored to the purposes of the community and should be understandable and timely. The review process that modifies the City's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations should also examine the processes to ensure that they are thorough, understandable, and fair to all participants.

**Strategy 9. Broaden the Scope and Resources of the Grants Program.**

The City should take full advantage of grant and funding sources that can advance community agendas. Actual application might best be done by the individual departments familiar with respective needs, with advice and assistance from an office with experience in application and administering grants. Citywide grants application and administration should be coordinated through the Community Development Department and the City's Grants Office, which has administered Community Development Block Grants in the past. Investment of additional resources and an expanded scope of effort in seeking grants should be understood as a positive investment in the future of the city.

**Strategy 10. Require formal citizen input regarding disposition of City-owned land.**

The City should revise its procedures to formally require input from citizens before decisions are made on the sale or other disposition of City-owned land. This should include providing, well in advance of decisions, both information and analysis of the proposed action, including an evaluation of its costs and benefits. It should allow for a public hearing with adequate notice before decisions are finalized. A clearinghouse of City-owned and tax-title land should be considered, as a means of cataloguing, advertising and assigning use.